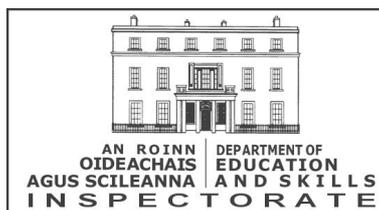


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning
REPORT**

**Holy Child Pre-school,
Lower Seán Mc Dermott Street, Dublin 1
Uimhir rolla: 19361N**

Date of inspection: 7 November 2013



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in the Holy Child Pre-school, Lr Seán Mc Dermott Street, Dublin in November 2013. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the pre-school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent questionnaires, and a selection of school documents.

Holy Child Pre-School was first established in 1969 as the Rutland Street Project which aimed to explore strategies which would enhance the education of socially disadvantaged children in North Inner City Dublin. This experimental project was initially co-funded by the Department of Education and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation from 1969 to 1974. The pre-school is currently funded by the Department of Education and Skills and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The unique historical context of this pre-school within an evolving educational context has generated a number of issues regarding status, operational arrangements and access to various resources which should now be reviewed in consultation with the relevant bodies using communication channels which are separate to this evaluation process.

The Holy-Child pre-school currently has 95 pupils enrolled and their attendance patterns are predominantly positive. The school caters for pupils from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and a significant number of them do not have English as their first language. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The quality of care and consideration for the child's holistic well-being is very high within a warm, inclusive, playful learning environment.
- The conscientious, resourceful staff provides integrated, age-appropriate, rich learning experiences which are underpinned by the principles of best practice in early education.
- The presence of highly skilled and experienced staff members together with a whole staff commitment to optimising children's development is a fundamental strength.
- The principal displays strong leadership and management skills.
- The sustained emphasis on supporting positive parental involvement in their children's learning is commendable.
- The pre-school facilities are of a very high standard.
- Strong relationships have been developed between the school and the local and wider communities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Additional strategies should be adopted to optimise childrens' oral language development in accordance with their needs and abilities.

- Staff is encouraged to explore strategies which extend and sustain best professional practices with particular reference to aligning planning, assessment and teaching practices with the learning goals from the Aistear framework.
- Formal in-school management (ISM) team meetings should be convened on a regular basis to support the implementation of improvement initiatives and their regular review.
- A formal parents' group should be established to augment the very good work which is being done to promote parental involvement in their childrens' learning.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of children

- The overall quality of childrens' learning is very good. They demonstrate a positive sense of identity as confident, competent and creative learners. They benefit significantly from their active engagement in a wide range of enriching learning experiences. Children demonstrate an appropriate range of social, motor, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills commensurate with their abilities. A confident mastery of a wide range of songs, stories and rhymes is also in evidence.
- A significant number of children who have English as an additional language (EAL) make considerable progress in their language acquisition during their two years in this pre-school. While considerable attention is given to the development of all children's oral language skills it is recommended that additional strategies be adopted to enhance their oral language skills in accordance with their particular needs and abilities.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is high with some excellent practice noted in some settings. Overall, the conscientious, resourceful staff provide integrated, age-appropriate rich experiences which are underpinned by the principles of best practice in early education. The effective facilitation of a wide range of play-based learning activities to support children's holistic development is commended.
- Considerable attention has been given to the development and implementation of a contextualised curriculum based on the Aistear curricular framework. The very good practices which have been adopted in some classrooms where planning, monthly progress reports and assessment is closely aligned to the learning goals from the Aistear framework, should be extended to all settings.
- Best practices observed included the provision of an appropriate balance of high quality teacher-led and child-led interactions which were closely aligned to the child's particular needs, emerging interests and learning styles.
- Provision for numeracy and literacy is of a very high standard. The successful promotion of the arts contributes significantly to the high quality of teaching and learning in this pre-school.
- Learning environments and suitable resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning. The school garden in particular is used very creatively to enrich children's learning. Print and number rich environments are used purposefully to stimulate and consolidate children's learning. It is recommended that audio resources be augmented.
- The quality of teaching provided for children with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. Staff members are resourceful in meeting the additional learning needs of

these children who are not in receipt of supplementary teaching resources. Teachers are advised to record differentiation approaches adopted for children with SEN.

- The pre-school liaises in a very effective manner with a wide range of professionals to ensure early identification and intervention for children with SEN. A range of alternative supports including art-therapy is provided by the school to assist children with additional needs.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The quality of care and consideration for the children's holistic well-being is very high. Sensitive, responsive relationships are in evidence. Teachers and child-care workers work in close collaboration to ensure all children are suitably cared for, motivated and managed in a calm, affirming manner. Clear, well-established routines provide a secure, inclusive environment with appropriate opportunities for children to develop and assert their independence. Ancillary staff play a valuable role in supporting children's well-being. Considerable attention is devoted to managing the transitions which pre-school children encounter.
- Social and cultural diversity is celebrated and there is due regard for the child's sense of identity as an individual and as a member of community. Regular, respectful liaison with children's parents is established practice. A suitable variety of co-curricular activities provide valuable opportunities for parental and community involvement in children's learning.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements for the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. Leadership and Management

- The board of management manages the pre-school in an efficient, competent and collaborative manner. It is recommended that the board of management establish a parents' forum which will augment the very good work which is being done to involve parents in their children's learning.
- The principal demonstrates well-developed management and leadership skills. Appropriate organisational procedures have been successfully established within a child-centred, learning-focused, caring community. He demonstrates a strong commitment to enhancing the quality of provision for the children and has been successful in accessing valuable supports and resources. A commendable emphasis has been placed on nurturing positive relationships with the parent and wider community.
- The principal is ably supported by a capable deputy principal, an innovative special duties post-holder and pro-active staff members who contribute to the on-going development of the pre-school. Formal in-school management team meetings should be convened on a regular basis to sustain the implementation of improvement initiatives and support their review.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The staff has actively engaged with the Sólta quality assurance framework in reviewing practice in recent years. The commitment of staff to ongoing professional development together with their active engagement in a number of valuable support programmes has impacted positively on developments in a number of key areas.

- Staff has commenced formal engagement with the school self-evaluation process and are currently gathering and analysing data relating to numeracy. Further exploration of strategies which will extend and sustain best practices is recommended.

Conclusion

The pre-school demonstrates strong capacity to engage in ongoing school improvement initiatives.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes this timely evaluation of early years teaching and learning at Holy Child Pre-school. It welcomes the good practice in place and its adherence to Aistear curriculum as well as the management and leadership within the school.

It also welcomes the four main recommendations suggested which are indeed areas of priority for the school. It should be pointed out that our endeavours in supporting EAL children in language development operates without a designated EAL Teacher who are employed in Primary schools with similar number of EAL children.

The Board also welcomes the proposed clarification of access to various resources and supports as outlined in the introduction to this report which, in its opinion, is limiting some children in “reaching their true potential by means appropriate to their age”.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

- Multi cultural books in Polish, Romanian and Mandarin have been sourced and purchased for Library use.
Storytelling sessions for children in Mandarin and Romanian are planned for Spring Term.
- Contact was made with N.P.C. re setting up a Parents Association
- Principal attended a workshop on P.A.